DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 707 CG 019 164

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TITLE School Related Problems of Adolescence: The Bielefeld Study.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (70th, San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986). Report on a project funded by the German Research Association DFG as part of the special research program SFB 227 "Prevention and Intervention in Childhood and Adolescence," University of Bielefeld, West Germany.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Adolescents; Educational Change; *Educational Trends; *Employment Opportunities; Foreign Countries; *School Organization; School Role; Secondary Education; Social Networks; Social Support Groups; *Student Attitudes; *Student Problems
IDENTIFIERS *West Germany

ABSTRACT

This report's central theoretical assumption is that adolescents are in risk of problem behavior if they are not sufficiently equipped with the social and psychological competencies to cope with culturally and socially defined developmental tasks specific to their ages. The first chapter describes the socio-structural factors which have changed the phase of adolescence during the last 30 years in West Germany. Special emphasis is given to the continued extension of the time spent at school and the growing tendency to postpone employment within the life course. The second chapter reports the findings of case studies which analyze the biographic importance of school-time for individual life courses during adolescence. A qualitative longitudinal study over 7 years is presented in which research was undertaken into how 40 adolescents aged 14 to 21 perceived the social and structural changes in their living conditions, in particular their educational and vocational opportunities, and how they ranked their school-time in relation to their individual biographies. Findings are discussed which revealed that school was primarily judged to be of instrumental value for acquiring the marks of adult status. The third chapter examines the role of school in the social support network of adolescence. A survey study of 2,000 students aged 14 to 21, designed as a 5-year longitudinal study starting in 1986, is described as a follow-up to the case studies which will examine school-related problems and the potentials for intervention that school systems can offer to adolescents. It is explained that the survey study will evaluate programs for social work and integrated youth services in school. (Author/NB)

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School Related Problems of Adolescents - The Bielefeld Study

Paper presented at the AREA conference
April 16-20, 1986, San Francisco

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CG 019164

Report on the project "School Related Problems of Adolescents", funded by the German Research Association DFG as part of the special research program SFB 227 "Prevention and Intervention in Childhood and Adolescence", University of Bielefeld, West Germany

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Abstract

The first chapter describes the socio-structural factors which have changed the phase of "adolescence" during the last 30 years in West Germany. Special emphasis is given to the continued extension of the time spent at school and the growing tendency to postpone employment within the life course. The resulting complexity and inconsistency of the demands on adolescents' social competences have created a potential "problem load" which, under certain conditions, may lead to problem behavior.

The second chapter reports the findings of case studies which analyze the biographic importance of school-time for individual life courses during adolescence. In a qualitative longitudinal study over seven years, research was undertaken into how 40 adolescents aged 14 to 21 perceive the social and structural changes in their living conditions, in particular their educational and vocational opportunities, and how they rank their school-time in relation to their individual biographies. The findings reveal that school is primarily judged to be of instrumental value, for acquiring the marks of adult status. Especially students with low achievement levels are in risk to show problem behavior, if they perceive their time at school as a "wasted" time of their lives and are finding it difficult, under these unfavorable conditions, to plan their future lives.

The third chapter examines the role of school in the social support network of adolescence. The theoretical and methodological conception of this part of the project, which currently is in progress, is outlined. A survey study of 2.000 students aged 14 to 21 follows up the case studies to examine school related problems and the potentials for intervention that the school system can offer in adolescence. In particular, the survey study evaluates programs for social work and integrated youth services in school. The survey study is designed as a five year longitudinal study starting in 1986.

1. The structural change of the adolescent phase of life

The concept of "adolescence" in industrialized countries has become a general societal category which includes all population groups. The economic conditions of work and, consequently, people's living conditions continue to vary considerably, and the social micro structures of adolescence still show significant class and sex-specific differences (Coleman et al. 1974; Rosenmayr 1976). However, the extension of compulsory schooling and the postponement of entry into employment have determined the macro structure of this phase of life for all their members.

1.1 Consequences of the structural change for the planning of the life course

In West Germany, the ten-year period of compulsory education, which has now become standard, prescibes a "minimum" of adolescence for members of all social strata and both sexes. School thus constitutes a major influence on adolescence for many years. Class and sex-specific differences are less reflected in the fact of school attendance itself than in the type of school attended and the long-term perspectives on occupational opportunities as a result of a particular form of schooling (Hurrelmann 1984b; for other countries see Persell 1977; Collins 1979; Meyer/Hannan 1979).

The average age at the time of entry into employment has increased in the last decades to about 19 years as shown by comparative analyses. Paid work which was typical of the great majority of 14 to 15 year olds in the 50s and 60s has been replaced in the 80s by mental "work", i.e. learning for school. Entry into the employment system and thus the confrontation with modes of work and behavior at office and factory continues to be postponed still further toward the end of adolescence. The adolescent's responsibility for securing a livelihood and his/her experience of being useful to society through productive work is thus being deferred biographically beyond the end of coming of age at 18 (Hurrelmann/Rosewitz/Wolf 1985 : 48; for other countries see Winsborough 1978).

The assessment of the impact of this structural change of the living conditions in adolescence and the repercussions on the individual and society is open to debate: Some studies point out that the "liberation"

from the necessity of earning money which we have seen since the 1950s has, for the first time, provided formerly disadvantaged groups of adolescents with real opportunities for greater self-realization and the formation of self. The scope for self-expression and self-reflection, for the development of individual life-styles in leisure and consumption, which used to be a typical attribute of middle-class, male adolescents, has ge_nerally increased and is now accessible also to female adolescents including those of the lower and working classes (Jugendwerk der Deutschen Shell 1981).

Other studies note that the postponement of employment goes hand in hand with a high degree of autonomy on the part of adolescents in the leisure and consumption sectors. Because of this, the studies argue, modes of behavior, patterns of orientation and life-styles of adolescents are becoming similar, if not comparable to those of adults. As, additionally, the rapidly spreading and widely received electronic entertainment media affect children, adolescents and adults in a very similar way, the measure of freedom formerly available to adolescents for developing typical life-styles of their own is disappearing. The debate over the orientation of a minority of adolescents toward "post-materialistic" values is usually also placed in this context. According to one view expressed in this debate, the growing tendency for an immediate gratification of needs, which is attributed to the considerable emphasis given to leisure and consumption, promotes attitudes and life-styles which tend to be opposed to concepts of work and achievement (Klages/Kmiecziak 1979).

Interpretations of this kind do not fully account for the highly differentiated reality of adolescent life. What is clear, though, are three structurally important facts:

a) The adolescent phase of life in the 1980s is characterized by an extended school career, which poses specific demands on behavior in terms of social skills and scholarly achievement. Adolescence has become identical with the period of formal schooling and, in view of the fierce competition for favorable starting positions in relation to future careers, constitutes a period of challenge in which adolescents have to cope with vital, biographically relevant tasks and problems (Arbeitsgruppe Schulforschung 1980: 104).

b) In addition and, to a certain degree, in contrast to school there are other important social sectors like leisure and consumption, access to commodity articles and consumer goods, the immediate social relationships with the peers of both sexes as well as political and religious affiliations, which offer adolescents a considerable amount of freedom for developing individual modes of behavior. This means that, in early adolescence at least, there is considerable scope for personal growth, providing a favorable position within the immaterial structure of opportunities of society. On the other hand, the widely held view that alienating influences on adolescent modes of behavior in these sectors are slight is open to doubt (Roberts 1983; Roe 1983).

c) For a majority of adolescents the social integration into the employment sector occurs late in biographical terms. By contrast, integration in the areas of politico-ethical commitments, friendships and sexual relations, and cultural and consumer orientations takes place relatively early. This constellation differs from what used to be typical, in structural terms, two or three generations ago (Jugendwerk der Deutschen Shell 1981).

d) It is typical of adolescents and their specific life settings that they are confronted with demands made on them arising from a variety of societal sectors, subsystems, and action fields which have their own institutionalized and organizational rules. In addition to the areas of family life and peer groups and the educational institutions specifically set up for them, adolescents are involved in further institutionalized action fields in the consumption, leisure and services sectors, except the employment system. Accordingly, they have to develop different profiles of social competences and responsibility in different societal sectors at different times and under different circumstances in a phase of life in which they still have to build up their personality.

e) Adolescents have to cope with a twofold inconsistency of competencies required of them: On the one hand, there are the complex tasks posed by the different societal sectors and action fields and their specific structures and forms and, on the other, there are the demands which derive from the degree of the adolescents' inclusion and autonomy in the various action fields. The transition to adulthood

is split into a disparate sequence of separate "status passages" which in turn follow specific patterns. The different tasks presented by these status passages are often incompatible or even contradict one another. This probably is a source for problem behavior in adolescence.

1.2 Social life settings, school, and problem behavior in adolescence

Studies on the differential processing of different social life settings including the school usually concentrate on certain manifestations of socially undesirable or deviant behaviors such as learning or behavior disorders, aggressiveness, violence, delinquency, drug abuse and psychosomatic disorders. As research experience shows, it is easier to reach theoretical agreement on the definition of undesirable manifestations of behavior than on the description of ideal or optimal forms of psychosocial development. No generally accepted conceptual tools have as yet been developed to describe and analyze the initial conditions and processes of optimal courses of development. "Normal" and "abnormal" ways of productive assimilation and management of social life settings are not yet known in full scope (Rutter 1980; Coleman 1980).

Empirical investigations into the influence which school as a system of organization and interaction has on problem behavior of children and adolescents reveal that it is hardly possible - either theoretically or methodically - to isolate particular variables as causal factors. Research results show that it is not possible to conclude with some precision that e.g. - to name just some very often mentioned school-specific factors - large school units, big classes, complex organization of school and lessons, overladen and unclear curricula, high demands on performances, severe ratings of performances, pedagogically imprudent teachers etc., cause basic symptoms of problem behavior. Each of these factors plays an important role for the welfare of students; whether, as a single factor, it causes stress which becomes leading to long-term impairments of mental and social welfare, is hard to prove (Hurrelmann 1981; 1984a).

The investigations at hand reveal that we dispose of much single information and have quite good knowledge about partial connections of variables in this field. Still it would be wrong to identify single

factors mentioned as causal factors for social stress on students. One thing could be said: The risk of problem behavior will be given if a combination of several single factors occurs together with an event of failing, which is perceived by the students as being serious and important. Stress in the sense of "problem load" can always be perceived when a specific combination of factors occurs which results in an unfavourably influencing social climate and which meets a student's personality which is sensitive for this. The problem behavior of a child or adolescent in school cannot be considered in isolation from objective organizational constellations and their subjective perception.

We need more research about different manifestations of problem behavior

a) in the contextual framework of everyday social living, and
b) in the context of the life span perspective.

Additionally, we need more information about the specific role of school, under changed conditions, in the genesis of problem behavior and in the social support network of adolescents. This means: More ecologically valid studies in the sense of Bronfenbrenner's definition (1979: 45), if possible in longitudinal design, which include different life settings in adolescence including the school.

In psychology, some very interesting studies of this type have been finished recently. In West Germany and Europe, the studies of Rutter (1980), Seiffge-Krenke (1985) and Silbereisen/Eyferth/Rudinger (1986) have to be mentioned specifically. Unfortunately, these studies do not concentrate very much on the school setting. In sociology, the studies of Brusten/Hurrelmann (1976), Buchmann (1983), and Blancpain/Zeugin/Häuselmann (1983) are interesting examples of ecologically and contextually valid field studies. However, except of Blancpain et al., these studies are no longitudinal studies, which would make it possible to follow up developmental processes and to reconstruct processes of person-environment interactions in the life course.

The present study tries to fill this gap.

2 The biographic importance of school in the life course

The research project "School Related Problems of Adolescents - The Bielefeld Study" is designed to give some more information about the biografic importance of school in the life course.(The main results of this part of the project are published in Arbeitsgruppe Schulforschung 1980; Hurrelmann/Wolf 1986.)

The central aim of the first part of the project has been to record the significance of the school career for the life history of adolescents and young adults, including an estimation of their individual chances of education and employment. In a qualitative longitudinal study over seven years we tried to analyze the way in which members of the age cohort born during the mid-60s perceive and interpret their educational and vocational opportunities and the consequences for their future lives.

2.1 Educational and vocational opportunities

Members of the age-groups born in the 1960s who feature in the case studies of our project started school at the end of the 60s and, after four years of "Grundschule" (primary school), changed to one of the secondary schools ("Hauptschule", "Realschule", "Gymnasium") and completed their years of compulsory full time schooling at the end of the 70s. (For a diagram of the West German school system see figure 1.)

- Description of the West German school system

West Germany's secondary school system diverges sharply from the homogeneous and comprehensive system in most developed countries. The traditional distinction between the three main types of secondary schools - the Gymnasium, the Realschule, and the Hauptschule - is still dominating. The Gymnasium is a nine-year program leading to the degree required for university entrance. It has traditionally been a selective and demanding institution. The Realschule leads to a certificate intended to permit entry into white-collar, business, or skilled trade occupations. The program is three years shorter than the Gymnasium program, but it is also relatively demanding. The Realschule certificate is not sufficient for admission to the university, but it can provide formal (albeit rare) access to programs that are. The Hauptschule has the lowest status and provides the least career opportunities. The program is shorter (including primary school, about nine to ten years), and

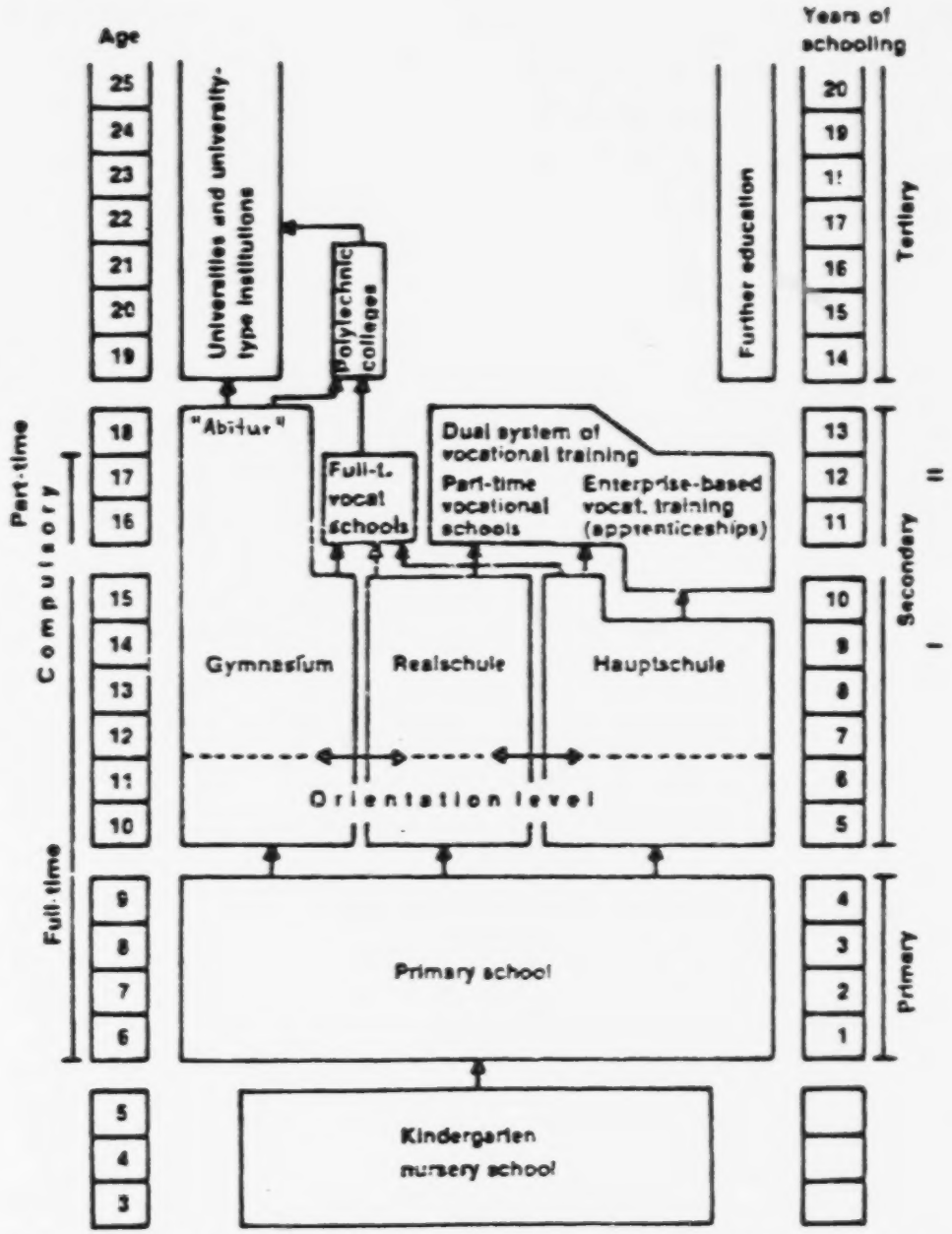

Figure 1. Diagram of the structure of the German school system. (Adapted, by permission, from Max Planck Institute, 1983:Figure 2.1.)

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the schools are not selective. Traditionally, the great majority of Germans were enrolled in the Hauptschule, but since the expansion of higher education in the last twenty years, the Hauptschule has enrolled students who are quite low in status, ability, previous performance, and aspirations (Max Planck Institute 1983).

The second level of the secondary school, Secondary II, includes the last three years of the Gymnasium, full-time vocational school, part-time vocational school, and apprenticeship. Though the system is not completely fixed, the track chosen in Secondary I largely determines further steps. Attendance in the Hauptschule, Realschule, or Gymnasium in Secondary I limits the range of options in the higher levels of the system. The options in Secondary II reflect the qualitative differences between the types of schooling in Secondary I.

The three main types of schools in Secondary I are closely associated with substantive status rights. The Gymnasium is linked to the university-prepared official, intellectual, and professional roles. The Realschule is linked to the middle and bourgeois classes. The Hauptschule is linked to the working and lower classes (Baker/Esmer/Lenhardt/Meyer 1985).

- The effects of the educational expansion

According to statistical data, the educational opportunities of adolescents attending school in the FRG between 1960 and 1980 have clearly increased: the proportion of "Realschule" and "Gymnasium" students in the 7th grade rose from 26 % in 1960 to over 50 % in 1980. The chances of attaining the levels set by the "Realschule" and the "Gymnasium" have also considerably improved during this period: of the 15 to 18 years old population in 1980, 41 % completed the "Realschule" and 22 % the "Gymnasium" and obtained the equivalent of O-levels and A-levels respectively, compared with only about 20 % and 7 % respectively twenty years earlier (Bundesminister 1985: 62). Thus, the number of those entering a "Realschule" or "Gymnasium" as well as their success rate at these schools have increased.

Thus, it can be said that in the FRG an "educational expansion" has taken place within the existing school system. The attempts to develop equivalent alternatives to the educational institutions of "Realschule" and "Gymnasium" were not successful, in spite of the establishment of comprehensive schools. The attraction of the traditional "Realschule" and "Gymnasium" education proved to be

extremely strong even for those families who had not been oriented toward these schools a generation earlier. At the same time, the "Hauptschule" lost much of its appeal despite an educational policy which has sought to reform and upgrade it.

A direct consequence of these developments has been a change in the social status of "Realschule" and "Gymnasium" education: it is no longer an élite thing, but has become typical for the majority of an age-group. Another implication is the decline of the social significance, of the exchange value of school-leaving certificates of higher secondary education. The "Abitur", attained by nearly a quarter of an age-group today, no longer guarantees access to top careers or highly qualified occupations. Within twenty years the "Realschule" leaving certificate has become a kind of standard civil attribute of the young German, a necessary instrument of access to the middle and higher level careers, especially in business and the services sector. Moreover, the "Abitur", in addition to being a requirement for university entrance, has also become a prerequisite for some vocational careers. An extended general school education beyond the years of compulsory schooling has thus become a necessary, but not sufficient condition of entry into attractive courses of vocational training.

Compared with those age-groups who started school ten or even twenty years earlier, the students born in the 60s are caught up in the wave of educational expansion which has led to a rapid build-up of the pyramid of formal school qualifications. The selection taking place after the fourth year of primary education has become less rigorous; even children from families who have so far had a low regard for school and its values attend "better" schools for longer periods of time, and larger numbers obtain higher school-leaving qualifications. But the latter no longer guarantee a future occupational status.

The school leavers who "only" finish the "Hauptschule" including those who do not obtain a final leaving certificate - they make up about 11 % of an age- group - face a difficult situation in training and the labor market. Through pressure created by the larger numbers of "Realschule" and "Gymnasium" school leavers possessing higher formal school qualifications, a process of displacement can be observed since the 70s in the areas of apprenticeship and labor which forces increasing numbers of "Hauptschule" leavers away from qualified business jobs and administrative and technical careers into manual jobs since

employers prefer those who are better qualified. The rise in the levels of average educational standards reduces the employment prospects of less qualified school leavers and almost eliminates the chance of those without any school-leaving certificate.

- The effects of the tightening of the labor market

The reason why this process of displacement has had such an immediate impact is that it coincided with a general economic slump. Although there was a relative increase in qualified jobs during the 70s, this did not keep pace with the speed and extent to which the school system produced qualified school leavers. This has in itself created a surplus of "Realschule" and "Gymnasium" school leavers available for attractive employment careers. An additional factor in the overall economic development is the tightening of the labor market attributable to the use of the latest technology, the increase in productivity, and the stagnation of trade because of saturation levels in the areas of goods and services. Thus, several factors are responsible for making the transition from school to employment extremely difficult for the age-groups of the mid-60s, a situation which is compounded by the high birthrate of these groups. For many "Hauptschule" leavers a suitable vocational placement - in terms of traditional standards - has under these circumstances become objectively impossible.

The adolescents have no choice, but to accept these facts as the framework conditions of their educational and occupational careers. Those who, in the late 70s and early 80s left school after compulory schooling, are confronted with a hostile labor market which is marked by mass unemployment, especially affecting the less qualified. Opportunities of further education and/or vocational training are equally rare because of the high birthrate and, consequently, the pressure of competition. Yet, they are expected to succeed in entering a career which is at least equal to the occupational and social status of their parents.

Even in these changed circumstances, entry into employment continues to be regarded as the crucial criterion of entry into adult life. A failure in managing this transition is considered pretty much intolerable in terms of current social expectations. Even with a successful transition, there is concern that the social level of the family is maintained and there is not drop in social status. Thus,

at a period of their lives when problems of physical development and identity crises are common, adolescent school leavers are expected to give primary concern to securing for themselves a social status. At an early point in their life history these adolescents have to face up to the responsibility demanded of them for their future careers, i.e. their future lives. As "children of the educational expansion" they have to cope with the developmental task of mastering the transition in status from school to employment in an extremely complex social and economic setting.

2.2 The instrumentalization of school education

In the first part of the project, research was undertaken into how 40 adolescents aged 14 at the first wave of three panels perceive the social and structural changes in their living conditions and how they rank their school time in relation to their biographies. We conducted interviews with 20 students from Hauptschule and 20 students from Gymnasium. Additionally, in the first wave we conducted interviews with the parents and the main teacher of each student.

The students were born in the mid of the 60s. The interviews were conducted in the years 1977, 1980 and 1984, when the students had reached the age of 21. In order to survey students with different records of achievement at school we included, at a 50:50 ratio, students who a) were in danger of having to repeat the 8th grade ("repeaters") or b) had just received an annual school report with well above average marks. In addition, the selection of students followed the random principle. In 1984, the sample was reduced by 2 students from Hauptschule and 2 students from Gymnasium. The inquiry was made up of slightly structured interviews lasting about an hour each. Data analysis was made according to a controlled system of preparing "extracts" of texts, referring to a "thematic field", comparable to the procedure used by Moriarty and Toussieng (1976). Precise information about the methodological procedure can be found in the detailed research report on the data analysis (Arbeitsgruppe Schulforschung 1980:210).

The first analytical step consisted in finding out from the interviews how the constellation of the educational and vocational prospects described was perceived on the part of the interviewees and especially which functions they ascribed to school education. This part of the analysis comprised all transcripts of the 3 x 40 = 120 interviews.

The crucial results of the interviews analyses in this field are as follows, showing no significant differences between Hauptschule and Gymnasium students:

a) The basic tasks of school education are considered by the majority of students to consist in "preparing for future life". School is said to make "sense" to the extent that it helps in structuring and mastering life after school, i.e. the remote future. Moreover, most of those questioned emphasized the role of school in making selections and assigning status. The school-leaving certificate is rated as a relevant result of learning at school. An "exchange value" is ascribed to the certificate for entry into life after school. The quality of the school-leaving certificate is though to provide a more or less favorable starting-point for entry into employment which is also considered by the students to be the mark of adult life.

   This description of the role of school parallels the dominating social interpretation in West Germany: "One doesn't learn for school, but for life". The implication is that as a young person you have to pass through a phase which is vaguely defined as intermediate or transitional, lasting ten to thirteen years, preparing for "real life" which is equated with a vocational career. During this transitional phase, which is supposedly not part of real life, you are expected to undergo intellectual training, putting your needs and interests second to acquiring knowledge and secure an adequate starting position for entry into "life". This process may or may not be successful; what remains at the end of school is a more or less useful certificate.

b) The prevalence of this pattern of opinion leads students to take an instrumental view of school. Accordingly, the value of school education by the majority of students is seen in terms of the value of the leaving certificate and not in terms of structure and content of the curricula or even wider contexts of meaning. According to our analysis, students cope with this restrictive operational orientation by defining and conducting school activities in terms of work based on the laws of paid labor. Their "payment" comes in the form of the school report with a trade-in value for spheres of life that are supposed to be more satisfying.

c) Failures in school achievement are perceived as severe interference in the process of school education and qualification. Below the surface of a seemingly routine coping with the widespread occurrence of "repeating a grade"(about 10 % of each age group) there is a considerable measure of subjective suffering. Initially, students and parents try to accept the event, blaming it on poor work, lack of interest and motivation. As students and parents see it, this negative attitude toward learning at school is due to the teacher's behavior. Failure is attributed to a lacking ability of the teacher in presenting his/her lessons which, in turn, is said to reflect on the potential of students. A majority of students who fail see the teacher as an agent of standards of achievement at school, and it is through him/her and his/her authority, demanding and implementing these standards, that they are confronted with what is expected of them at school. Thus, failure is also "blamed" on the teacher for failing to play his/her part and not redeeming the obligation attributed to school, i.e. providing a useful certificate for future employment.

   Teachers do not agree with this interpretation. They trace failure at school to attitudes toward learning and work which, in turn, are seen as dependent on personality and family background as well as living conditions, environment, and leisure activities of adolescents. In the interviews, teachers make it clear that they regret the apathy and lack of effort on the part of failing students. But they reject any responsibility for these symptoms and see no way to help students at school where communication occures primarily by way of teaching.

d) Our analysis shows that students and parents, on the one hand, and teachers, on the other, interpret failure at school in a way that exempts them from any direct responsibility. This can be viewed as a kind of "social repression" of the socially induced pressure of expectations affecting all those involved in the institution of school. An instance of failure at school is judged by all concerned as an unpleasant incident since it may crucially affect the future career at school and in life, and no one wishes to take full responsibility for it.

2.3 The gradual erosion of status expectations in the perspective of the life course

In our study, we were able to record changes in the position at school or in employment on three occasions, successively, at three year-intervals,

and to obtain subjective interpretations of the actual situation and assessments both of the time spent at school, future perspectives in terms of employment and retrospective interpretation of the time of school. The analysis aims to reconstruct as exactly as possible the educational careers of adolescents, being an important element in their life courses, and to assess the specific impact of the structural framework conditions of school and social environment. Additionally, we recorded subjective interpretations of the positions achieved at the time of inquiry in the educational career in terms of past and future life history.

The inquiry we conducted started with the 8th grade, one year before the end of compulsory schooling which was nine years at the time. Since the interviews were repeated, we were able to monitor individual school careers and, when it happened, school-leaving and the transitional phase leading to vocational training or employment. During the period under review, all of the "Hauptschule" students investigated undergo a "status transition" from being a student to being an apprentice or employee. In contrast to the group of "Gymnasium" students, "Hauptschule" students are faced early in their life history with having to develop means of orientation and practical preparation for this important status transition. For "Gymnasium" students, although there is no direct need to prepare for it after nine or ten years out of a total of thirteen years of school, the anticipation of the transitional phase nevertheless is an important factor as our analysis shows.

The crucial results are as follows:

a) The Hauptschule students are mastering the transitional period by gradually lowering their personal aspirations in terms of employment and thus living standards. This narrowing-down process corresponds to the unfavorable classification of achievements by the school and the limited applicability of qualifications in the labor market. Ultimately, there is nothing left for "Hauptschule" students with or without a normal school-leaving certificate, but to adjust to the demands posed by the need to work. Our interviewees face up to them whatever the disillusionment. Most of them, being of workingclass background, know of the necessity to make a living by underpriviledged manual work.

   In trying to come to terms wiht their status transition these students find themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand, they witness an erosion of their hopes for the future, which were primarily associated with

ambitious career goals, and realize that their expectations of a meaningful life after school will not be fulfilled. The idea that work might become a sphere for the realization of different personal goals carried over from school becomes a vague hope. Of their former interpretation of school, i.e. that it serves as a preparation for live, only a bare minimum remains, namely its instrumental core which, in this period of their lives, is proving a definite disadvantage. Once in vocational training or employment, they soon realize that the "real life" they thought they missed out on is yet to be found elsewhere.

On the other hand, for the sake of their future identity, these students have to make every effort to interpret the forthcoming or accomplished status transition as a biographically logical and consistent event. So they are forced to reconcile themselves to what they have actually achieved, even if it falls short of their original goals. Against this background constellation students make intense efforts to construct a subjective plausibility for their prospective vocational career by re-sorting to their biography in order to create a sense of continuity between their changed life situation and their past (see the similar conclusions of the "Bremen Studie" by Heinz und Krüger 1984).

The immediate social environment of adolescents, i.e. families, neighbourhoods and friends, provides a network of social relationships and a range of patterns of interpretation and action for accomplishing the status transition and its interpretation in a biographic context. Which type of interpretation and action is applied by the adolescents, therefore depends largely on the subcultural and environmental setting (for similar results see Hübner-Funk/Müller/Gaiser 1983). Moreover, patterns of interpretation and action show some sex-specific aspects. Significantly, in our case study the girls from families living in working-class areas are the most ready to accept the reduction in vocational ambitions and future plans during the status transition from school to employment.

b) In contrast to the students from "Hauptschule", "Gymnasium" students are not faced with having to work immediately after completing compulsory schooling. They are not subjected to a change in status, but are able to keep their student status for a longer period. Instances of failure, however, may lead to a more or less tangible lowering of original career expectations, depending on the severity of institutional implications.

The great majority of these students, however, feel uncertain about their future career. They are afraid of not being able to reach their occupational goals, and thus the social status they had wished for. This also applies to high-ability students. From the early school years they accept that they are under pressure of performance. They make it their goal to perform well and conform to school standards - for a career which they hope to reach ten years later at the earliest. But they are not sure that they will succeed; the socially imposed pressure of selection and increasing competition for training and jobs is causing anxiety. On the other hand, all "Gymnasium" students are aware of the privilege and prestige linked with attending a "Gymnasium". They feel like working with a "safety net", but they have become suspicious as to whether this net might have holes.

c) The students from all schools do not subjectively perceive as progress the historic event of greatly increased educational opportunities compared with those of their parents. On the contrary, they have their own worries, e.g. the complex situation of the labor market. As the interviews with their parents show, the current situation is compared with that of the previous generation when the parents went to school; but the expected fruits of the "educational expansion" have not materialized.

The students perceive the situation in which they find themselves as a combination of factors which have got to be reckoned with by individual strategies. The narrowing-down of opportunities during the transition from school to employment is accepted as fact. The majority of students does not think there is a chance of changing the situation, e.g. by altering the causes. Instead, they look for individual ways of responding to the situation as it is. Any strategies of action relate to considerations of how to minimize the negative effects of the situation on one's own life and, if possible, optimize existing opportunities.

The prevailing pattern of subjective assimilation of these circumstances thus consists in an individual optimization of available opportunities to secure a favorable starting position for the transition from school to employment: In order to secure access to higher career levels, one has to get into the best possible starting position for post-secondary education and training, with as many options as possible. The single most important element in this starting position which can be influenced

is the quality of the school-leaving certificate.

The "optimization strategy" is a perspective of action which is not committed and may even be indifferent to questions of educational content. The different types of school education are instrumentalized within this strategy: they become means to an end, i.e. acquiring a school-leaving certificate. This certificate has, in turn, been assigned the function of being a necessary condition for entering employment.

d) According to their own assessment as well as that of their parents, the students feel they have to obtain school qualifications which are formally at least one step above those of their parents in order to maintain and safeguard the social status. Thus, nearly all "Hauptschule" students intend to complete,with a qualified certificate, the 10th grade - which, in this type of school, provides the best possible qualifications - because they are afraid that leaving with just an ordinary leaving certificate of the "Hauptschule", they will not be able to enter vocational training or employment which, in substance and socially, would meet their own and their parent's expectations. Likewise, "Gymnasium" students also wish to obtain the best possible "Abitur" marks ensuring university entrance - a goal which has been made more difficult through more stringent conditions of entry - or at least securing optimum post-secondary opportunities.

What emerges from these definitions of the various situational contexts and action strategies based on them by the adolescents interviewed, are both a reflection of and a reaction to the competition which has resulted in a process of displacement between the differently qualified groups entering training or employment. Finding a solution to the contradictions between planning one's life and the restrictive possibilities for realizing such plans is primarily a task for the individual adolescent and his/her immediate social environment of family and friends.

- School as a "wasted" period of life

The results of the case studies show, that students tend to develop individual patterns of interpretation to cope with the impact of the structural change of the adolescent phase of life as it was analysed in chapters 1.1 and 2.1. They consider the content and potential stimuli for experience as mediated by school in an abstractionist view. They interpret the different educational "tracks" provided by

the school system mainly as a means to acquiring a certificate, as one of society's conditions for starting a career. Adolescents who subscribe to this type of interpretation, i.e. to a formal definition of the function of school, attach great importance to school and the time spent there for their future social careers, without, however, acknowledging its significance as an orientation or support in coping with life's present and future demands.

This instrumental conception of school which negates its content and biographic significance is not commensurate with its actual importance. Especially for those adolescents who do not conform to the school's system of social rules, who are not successful to the extent that they receive good reports and qualifications, who fail to reach this level of success, have no access to meaningful experience or memories. Their identification with school as an institution and a phase of life is necessarily distorted, and they do not perceive school as a meaningful or profitable period of their lives. Rather, school to them seems a phase of life that they are obliged to pass through, the connecting link with the phases of life to follow. Consequently, school-time is regarded by these adolescents as a "wasted" time of their lives since it does not carry any instrumentally usable benefits for their subsequent social careers.

Adolescents who suffer from learning difficulties and failure of achievement at school are liable, through this constellation, to get into difficult, seemingly inextricable situations in relation to their search for identity and their plans for the future. They are not able, on account of the instrumental value of school education, to view school as a productive and useful time in their course of life nor are they capable of recognizing that passing through school provides the starting positions for future social careers. As a result they have no way of constructively processing failure at school and the accompanying social experiences which occur during the ten or more years spent there.

Our analyses show that not only students with bad records of achievement but even a minority of those who are successful at school are having difficulties in recognizing the connection between the curriculum-based activities at school and everyday life. It is obvious that they find it easier to cope with the incongruities between school

and everyday life because they are usually more aware of the effects of the instrumental value of school-leaving certificates and qualifying grades. Nevertheless they, too, have difficulty in trying to understand the immediate value of curricular programs for their present and future lives. Knowledge as mediated by school seems largely irrelevant and without application to everyday life. Such an interpretation of their situation, subject as it is, to insecure and adverse working and living conditions, must be perceived by them as unsatisfactory and worrying, coming at a time of their lives when the foundations are being laid for the formation of identity and personal designs of life. This situation poses a considerable pedagogical challenge to which school, as an important agent of socialization, as well as all institutions and services concerned with youth, including youth social work and counseling programs, must respond.

3. The role of school in the social support network of adolescence

The second part of the project that started in 1986, focuses on the question of the role of school as an element in the social support network of adolescence. This part of the project is run as survey study. It is based on a questionnaire in which 1,000 boys and girls aged 14 to 21 will participate . Intervies have begun in 1986 and will be repeated five times at yearly intervals (panel questioning) including two age cohorts (N = 2.000).

3.1 The theoretical concept of "support network"

As discussed in chapter 1, structural changes occur during adolescence, which are due mainly to a growing trend toward an extended school attendance and a deferment of the time of entry into employment; the impact of these changes on individual conceptions of life and the societal repercussions remain to be studied and described.

The consequences of the heavy emphasis of school during adolescence are ambivalent:

a) On the one hand, the extension of school-time "deprives" adolescents of an important field of social experience. The late entry into employment prevents material independence. Opportunities for earning money, for self-determination and for leading a life which is relatively independent of the family of origin are no doubt restricted because of the prevailing state of dependence. In many respects employment is a prerequisite for the acquisition of independence in other areas because it offers more than just a material basis in view of its substantial psychological and social implications for adolescents and their social environment. Both publicly and privately the phase of adolescence is always defined and interpreted as a part of the socialization process, of the integration of adolescents into working life and the economic system.

b) On the other hand, a typical characteristic of adolescents' everyday lives in that, objectively speaking, they have access to good educational opportunities and enjoy a large measure of independence and autonomy in a number of action fields, such as leisure, entertainment, consumption, politics, information and sexual relations, all of which enable them to choose and try out new and individual paths leading toward optimal growth and social integration. Adolescents reach a degree of autonomy and responsibility

characteristic of adult status in different role segments and action fields at different times and in different situational contexts. Although they are dependent on the objectively given structures of education, employment and leisure, they themselves have to carry the burden and responsibility for coordinating the divergent tasks required of them, which involve a diversity of options and decision-making steps.

The significance that school-time objectively has gained for the structure of adolsescence at the cost of time spent in employment, calls for a conceptual and pedagocical response by the societal institution of school. De facto school plays a key role in the constitution of adolescents' everyday lives. This is true both for the structure of day-to-day action processes and long-term perspectives on life. School must be analyzed in terms of a constituent element in the everyday social support network.

- Analyses of the significance of social support networks

The research into supportive measures designed for problem situations occurring during adolescence has for years concentrated too much on formal aspects, i.e. on the area of organized and formal interventions (youth services, social pedagogy, organized youth work, counseling services of youth departments and employment offices). In recent years, though, more emphasis has been given to the informal sector: to the family and, in particular, the social network of relatives and neighbors as well as the informal social structures of independently organized youth clubs, friends and cliques which operate on different levels and offer various kinds of support both in connection with leisure activities and the school and/or vocational sectors (Froland et al. 1981; Maguire 1983; Iscoe/Harris 1984).

The terminological metaphor of "network" is used as an analytical tool to describe the relations between social units. In this sense "networks" consist of individuals plus the relations between them. On a generalized level the term of social network denotes the totality of the relations that an individual maintains to other individuals and groups, e.g. to male/female partners, family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues, fellow club members etc. (Barnes 1972; Gottlieb 1981; Whittaker/Garbarino 1983). In this

connection it should be noted that individuals who are socially well integrated into such networks tend to be more resistent to stress than others (Keupp 1982; Hirsch/Jolly 1984).

The function of support systems in the social environment of adolescents is generally understood as an offer of help in coping with problem situations. Support systems may consist of a potential of interventional measures either of the informal or formal systems. Since these support systems may have a cumulative effect, their interdependencies and structural interrelations are also significant. In this sense we can speak of a potential of interventions operative in specific social support networks to assist adolescents in coping with problem situations (Olbrich/Todt 1984).

- Analyses of the supportive significance of schools

In the recent pedagogical literature an intensive discussion has started on the role of school in the support networks of adolescence. From the point of view of its structural position - as an important temporal and social factor in the everyday life of adolescents and its constitutional character as a public educational institution - school has a potential key role in the structuring of supportive measures in adolescence (Sommer 1977; Asp/Garbarino 1983; Hurrelmann/Wolf 1986: 165).

To the extent that school increases its pedagogical competence, it could become a central element in the support network and in the system of youth counseling services, in addition to and in cooperation with the youth services. The following measures are conceivable:

a) Pedagogical youth work at school: This involves programs within the school system, that are related to the students' everyday experiences. Programs should be directed toward meeting students' needs in terms of introducing everyday experiences into the contents of the specific curricula and the extracurricular activities, including informal activities related to personal problems as encountered by adolescents.

b) Counseling at school: This addresses aspects of school careers, assistance with learning problems and poor levels of achievement, counseling in case of psychical or social problems, e.g. by way of individual counseling, group sessions or structured programs.

Such measures can only be realized through cooperation between the official youth departments and other local authorities responsible for the various youth services and the schools. Measures and models which are based on an integrated approach, involving both school pedagogical and social pedagogical programs, are particularly difficult to translate into practice. Such an approach would mean the inclusion of social pedagogical perspectives into the schools' curricular programs, and bringing changes, inspired by social pedagogical considerations, to the curriculum, placing equal emphasis on cognitive, social, and emotional learning processes within subject-related study. A precondition for this would be a social pegagogical "enrichment" of the teacher's role by broadening his/her competencies as a social educator. An organizational and structural example of such integrated models would be tutorial systems operated by the schools. Another example, the so-called "team and small groups model" (Team-Kleingruppen-Modell) which divides a large school system into smaller units in which a set team of teachers is assigned to a grade for one year, also provides a structural base for introducing integrated social pedagogical programs. Models like these are close to the Primary Mental Health Project, the Social Problem Solving Curriculum, the Behavioral Science Curriculum and the Community-School-Program (cf. surveys in Cowen at al. 1975; Allen at al. 1976; Brandtstädter 1982).

At present the research published on model programs primarily consists of specialized articles. But a theoretically and methodologically sound analysis and evaluation of the efficiency of the social system of school within the support network of adolescence and a definition of the working profiles of the various youth services presuppose systematic studies of the interdependent web of potentials of social interventions addressed toward adolescents. This part of the project is undertaking studies with this focus.

3.2 Theoretical assumptions

a) The central theoretical assumption of our project is that adolescents are in risk of problem behavior, if they are not sufficiently equipped with the social and psychical competencies to cope with culturally and socially defined developmental tasks specific to their ages. Adolescents have to acquire the following competencies:

- meeting standards of school performance, acquiring occupational skills and future occupational orientations;
- establishing social relationships with the peers of both sexes;
- developing a system of ethical values and norms and political articulation and participation;
- participating in consumption and leisure activities and the broad spectrum of cultural activities.

Competence in this respect denotes the availability and appropriate application of actions, in order to cope effectively with concrete life situations which are immediately relevant to the individual and his/her social environment. We speak of a risk for problem behaviour when, on account of specific personal or social (structural and situational) factors, inappropriate or inadequate competencies are acquired, temporarily or permanently, and the skills and abilities expected and demanded by the social environment are not forthcoming. An individual's action and performance competencies, in terms of profile and structure, would then not fit the prevailing general and subcultural standards as determined by institutional or age-related norms.

b) As outlined in chapter 1, we assume that today many adolescents are subject to a structurally - conditioned tension-field, characterized by a relatively high degree of freedom and autonomy in the areas of social relationships with peers, political articulation and participation in consumption and leisure activities, on the one hand, and a relatively low degree of freedom and autonomy in the area of standards of school performance and future occupational orientations, on the other. This constellation is rich in conflict and crisis potential especially because of the biographic postponement of the transition to an occupational training and subsequent entry into employment. The threatening impasse at the point of transition to assuming the vital

occupational role may adversely affect an individual's scope for action in many other role segments and action fields and his/her plans for the future, because the adolescent phase is still be viewed as a major socializational process oriented toward an integration into employment and the economic process.

Individual problem behavior is likely to occur, if the specific life setting cannot be effectively coped with. Due to the disproportion between the tasks posed by specific situations, on the one hand, and the action competencies, possibilities for individual coping and personal experiences of support available to adolescents, on the other, adolescents tend to develop "unfit" solutions.

These theoretical assumptions rest on psychological conceptions of personality and development which are concerned with aspects of competence and coping strategies (Lazarus/Launier 1978; Pearlin/Schooler 1978; Haan 1981; Lerner/Busch-Rossnagel 1981; Oerter/Montada 1982; Magnusson/Allen 1983), but at the same time places these conceptions in a social science context which discusses socio-structural variables as constituent elements of the process guiding the development of competence (Hurrelmann/Ulich 1980; Geulen/Hurrelmann 1982; Hurrelmann 1986).

c) According to this line of thinking, which gives great emphasis to aspects of socialization theory, the concept of problem behavior is not held to be a clinical one. The adolescents featured in the study have difficulty in coping with demands of social actions which drive from specific life settings, but whose coping strategies cannot really be considered pathological. Within the "normal" spectrum of behavior we want to compare adolescents with high and low "problem loads", their individual coping strategies and the intervention potentials of the social environment. Adolescents who are subject to problem behavior are not to be equated with adolescents who show clinical disorders and may need medical or psychiatric treatment. This does not exclude the possibility that some of these adolescents may have been included along with the others.

The aim is to study different manifestations of problem behavior, especially learning disorders, aggressive and degressive social disorders, extroverted and introverted forms of psychosomatic

disorders, conflict-oriented problem behavior of the delinquent type and withdrawal-oriented problem behavior of the health-endangering (for example drug abuser) type. The intention is, in this way, to account for the multi-dimensional structure of the features of those forms of coping in adolescence which substantially affect the ongoing process of socialization. As an overall manifestation of problem behavior, finally, we take insufficient self-acceptance and low self-esteem.

Apart from the personal resources available for coping, the social resources, as intervening variables, which also provide support for adolescents, will be analyzed. The intervention potential of the social environment will include all resources of support and assistance which adolescents receive from their specific environmental contexts. On this level all emotional, instrumental, material and practical forms of support will be considered.

The assumption is that the support functions of social networks are in an interactive relation to the individual possibilities of coping with life settings during adolescence. A very important factor is supposed to be the active orientation of individual adolescents toward particular networks because it determines their readiness to accept offers of support, irrespective of whether these are coming from formal or informal systems. In view of the fact that formal and informal support systems are anchored in the environmental perspectives of adolescents, these systems are not analyzed separately, but in their interdependent context of a support network. In this way, we hope to gain insights into the conditions of acceptance of the formal support systems of the youth services, such as youth work, counseling and social work at school, and how these are related to the informal support in the coping with life settings. Special attention will be given to describing in detail the specific role of support systems integrated into school. For this purpose the study will cover diverse school pedagogical and social pedagogical conceptions of different schools.

In terms of a path model, the main theoretical variables of our project can be shown as follows (figure 2):

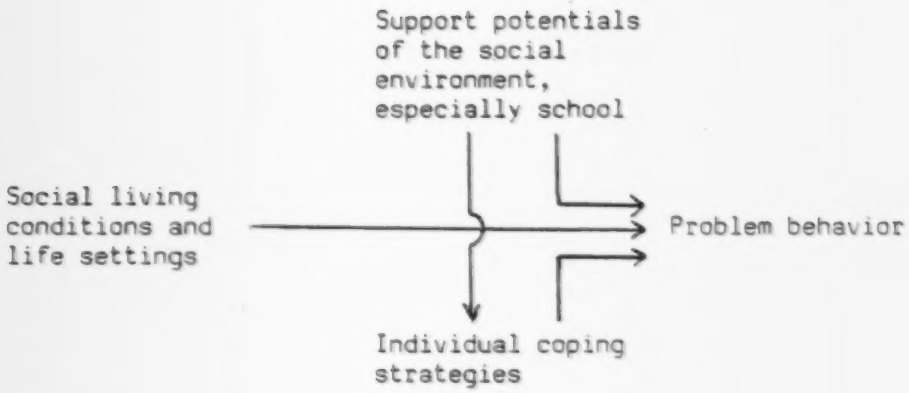

Figure 2. Diagram of the structure of variables of the survey study

This model, which is necessarily simplified and reduced in terms of complexity, represents some of the main theoretical assumptions. The arrows in the figure indicate the theoretically assumed directions of the major influences of the variables in relation to one another. The empirical study is to explain and describe the kind and intensity of the interrelations between the variables and possibly produce alternative patterns of connections. Accordingly, the methodological design of the study should be such that an analysis can be made of the impact of different conditional constellations of independent variables and of the impact of different constellations of independent and intervening variables on the dependent variable.

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